The truck or horsecart of the buyer comes to the stonecutting area, the blocks are loaded and taken away. Prior to sale, for convenience, stone may be taken from the cutting area. It is loaded on horse carts, the men carrying the heavy blocks by means of ropes looped around the ends of the stone and over poles which in turn rest on the shoulders. A six foot length (1 ken linear measure), one foot wide and about ten inches thick sells for ¥140 (1951-52).

Foot injuries are the chief hazards of this occupation. The toes may be accidentally cut by the long chisel, and there is danger of bruising or crushing by accidentally dropping the block, or by rolling when it is being dislodged. Very hard and calloused hands are the mark of the stonecutter; his hands are especially conspicuous for the hard, raised areas on the palm around the base of the fingers, the result of the constant lifting and pounding of the long chisel. There is also danger to the eyes in flying chips but few use glasses or goggles.

Like some phases of fishing, this work is for the young and the physically mature men. After the middle forties or early fifties, a man no longer does the heavy work and confines himself to lighter chores. The very old and the retired may chip and finish the foundation and the pyramidal stones.

If a cutter is unable to extract all the stone in a plot whose stone he has bought, there are also customary solutions. When the father dies, his son continues the workings and returns the field to the owner. If a stone worker moves to another village when only half the work has been done, he arranges for a friend, relative, or neighbor to take over the remaining part.

4

Restoring the Land

Formerly excavations (which might be 10 or 15 feet deep and the size of a large room) were refilled by the buyer of the stone rights. Rocks, pebbles, and miscellaneous trash were used as fill, but following the war there has been a heavy demand for rock and stone for road construction. As a consequence, many excavations are now only partly refilled. After refilling, houses are built on the sites of formerly excavated land. Here and there one can see sweet potatoes or vegetables growing on land which formerly was covered with stone. The original state of the land, its appearance after excavation and its restoration may be seen in Figure 2. Evidences of this reclamation may be seen throughout the stoneworking area.

Minatogawa, because it lacks vegetation for protective and decorative purposes, is a good example of the use and adaptation of stone to local needs. There are still stone fences, waist or shoulder height, and many small stone boundary lines, a foot or two and of uneven height. Coral stones, weathered by the sea, honeycombed and pocked, are seen everywhere.